

***Carex capillaris* L.**
hair-like sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Sensitive
Rank: G5S1

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1969): Culms slender and lax, 4 to 24 inches tall, densely tufted, strongly phyllopodic. The leaves mainly in a basal cluster, $<1/16$ to $1/8$ inch wide up to about 6 inches long, generally much shorter than the culms. Terminal spike staminate or rarely gynaeandrous, $1/8$ to $1/2$ inch long. Lateral spikes 1-4, usually more or less remote, on lax, capillary, nodding or loosely spreading peduncles, 5 to 20 flowered, $1/4$ to $2/3$ inch long, sometimes compound. Pistillate spikes all subtended by sheathing bracts, the sheath $1/4$ to 1 inch long, or the uppermost one more reduced, the lowermost of these bracts generally with a definite blade $1/2$ to $2 1/2$ inches long, the others with the blade often more or less reduced or obsolete. Pistillate scales shorter but often wider than the perigynia, white-hyaline distally and usually also marginally, otherwise light brown or greenish, eventually deciduous. Perigynia more or less elliptic or lance-ovate, $<1/8$ to $1/8$ inch long, tapering to a short, poorly defined, hyaline-tipped and obliquely cleft beak, obliquely 2-nerved, not much if at all compressed, loosely enclosing the achene and empty distally, glabrous, or faintly scabrous-serrulate toward the beak, shining brown to olive green. Stigmas 3. Achene trigonous, $<1/8$ inch long, jointed to the style.

Identification Tips: The slender form of the culms and the nodding or spreading spikes are good characters to help identify this species.

Phenology: Identifiable June through August.

Range: Circumboreal; south in North America to northeastern Oregon, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Michigan, and New York. In Washington it is known from Okanogan County in the Okanogan Highlands physiographic province.

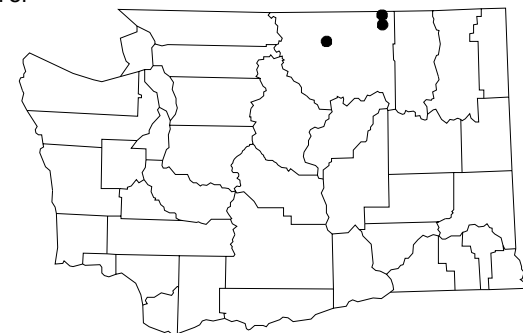
Habitat: Streambanks, wet meadows, wet ledges, and marshy lake shores. Elevation ranges from 2800 to 6500 feet (WA). Other species occurring at Washington sites include *Betula glandulosa*, *Potentilla fruticosa*, *Juncus* sp., and *Zigadenus elegans*.

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Known distribution of
Carex capillaris in
Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Photo by John Gamon

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Ecology: This species is identified as a facultative wetland species (USFWS 1988), which means that it is generally found in wetlands, but occasionally occurs in non-wetlands. This may indicate an ability to withstand moderate changes in the hydrologic regime, depending upon the site and whether or not the change results in the site being wetter or drier.

State Status Comments: Only three known occurrences in Washington, all in Okanogan County.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory is needed throughout Washington in appropriate habitats.

Threats and Management Concerns: Threats to the taxon include significant hydrologic change, timber harvesting, and recreation (camping and fishing).

References:

Cronquist, A. et al. 1977. *Intermountain Flora: Vascular Plants of the Intermountain West, U.S.A. Volume Six*. The New York Botanical Garden, New York. 584 pp.

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1988. National list of vascular plant species that occur in wetlands. USFWS Biological Report 88 (24).